



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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New NOAA Maps Show Big Island Has Most Live Coral of Main Hawaiian Islands

New coral reef maps released by NOAA reveal that the Big Island of Hawaii has the highest percentage of live coral of the main Hawaiian islands. The finding supports studies indicating that geologically young islands such as the Big Island generally have more live coral cover than older islands.

"Live coral covers 57 percent, or 29 square miles, of the waters surrounding the Big Island of Hawaii," said Timothy A. Battista, an oceanographer with NOAA's Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment. "That is the most live coral coverage of any of the main Hawaiian islands."

The maps are the result of the most comprehensive assessment of the extent and types of shallow-water seafloor habitats in Hawaii to date. In all, the NOAA mapping effort covered 506 square miles of ocean habitat on Hawaii, Kahoolawe, Maui, Lanai, Molokai, Oahu, Kauai, Niihau and Kaula. The Hawaii survey was part of a larger effort by NOAA and partners to map all U.S. shallow water coral reef ecosystems and associated deeper reefs.

"The maps provide a valuable new tool for scientists and marine resource managers working in the Hawaiian Islands," said Dan A. Polhemus with Hawaii's Division of Aquatic Resources. He added that they also offer "a solid foundation for structuring research projects and conservation planning."

Coral reefs create habitat for many fish and invertebrate species with commercial value, support tourism and recreational industries, and shelter coastlines from storm disturbance. Hawaii's coral reefs contribute an estimated \$360 million to the state's economy each year.

NOAA prepared the maps in partnership with other federal and state environmental resource agencies, the University of Hawaii, nonprofit organizations, and local technology firms. This work was funded by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program.

The maps are available online at
http://ccma.nos.noaa.gov/products/biogeography/hawaii_cd_07/startup.html.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:

NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science: <http://coastalscience.noaa.gov>

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program: <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov>